

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 004032

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TAL AFAR SUNNI AND SHI'A SHEIKHS AGREE ON NEED FOR RECONCILIATION

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert Ford for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

**¶1.** (C) Summary: Tal Afar Sunni and Shi'a sheikhs told Iraqi Government delegates September 27 they want reconciliation to begin reconstruction efforts. The two groups had not been willing to meet each other earlier. The parties agreed to future discussions on the Iraqi Government's proposed \$47 million reconstruction budget for the next 90 days. Recruitment into the police force is another big issue. End Summary.

**¶2.** (C) Nineveh Provincial Government officials met Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) members, local representatives, and MNF-I officials September 27 in Tal Afar to discuss reconstruction and reconciliation. Approximately sixty local Sunni and Shi'a sheikhs and others attended the meeting. The ITG contingent included representatives from the ministries of Communication, Education, Electricity, Finance, Health, Housing and Construction, Interior, Municipalities and Public Works, and Transportation. Poloff also attended. This was the first meeting that local Sunni and Shi'a sheikhs attended. In the last meeting, the Sunni sheikhs would not sit in the same room as the Shi'a sheikhs.

**¶3.** (C) All parties -- including the ITG -- blamed foreigners for bringing terrorism and deep sectarian division to Tal Afar. But the Tal Afar Chief of Police, Sabah al-Mahmouri, stated that ninety-five percent of the terrorists are locals. Only one Sunni Sheikh denied the statement. Another sheikh explained that neighbors fear false information passed along sectarian divides to incite Iraqi Police to arrest innocent people.

**¶4.** (C) In comparison, the ITG has given no compensation money to residents despite a statement by MOD Dulaimi September 17 in Tal Afar that the ITG would provide \$1,000 per family. Dr. Haider al-Abadi of the Prime Minister's office told the group there was a plan for the ITG to give each family an initial 50,000 Iraqi dinars-- \$34 dollars-- but there was no discussion about the timeframe for the ITG to empower the provincial government to take the lead on compensation efforts.

**¶5.** (C) The ITG has a proposal for Phase 1 projects- first 90 days totaling approximately \$47 million, including \$10 million for compensation. These projects address needs in water, electricity, sewer system, communications, health, education, and construction. There was little discussion of this reconstruction proposal, however. Instead, the common theme echoed by several participants was that despite urgent need there must be reconciliation before reconstruction.

**¶6.** (C) There was heated discussion about the historically sectarian recruitment of Iraqi Police officers. One Shi'a imam angrily questioned why the application form asks for religious affiliation.

**¶7.** (C) According to the Mayor of Tal Afar, there are 400 Iraqi Police patrolling in town and 350 in the surrounding areas. He said he needs 2500 to provide adequate security, and his current goal is to hire 1000 new recruits. An 8-week course for 200 new Iraqi Police from all tribes begins October 3. A 2-week course for 150 current Iraqi Police from Tal Afar began this week in Sulaymaniyah, and it will certify them as legitimate police officers in the eyes of the MOI. Because recent instability prevented recruiting within Tal Afar, however, an MOI mobile recruiting team would conduct three days of local recruiting to the Iraqi Police force.

**¶8.** (C) All parties agreed with the ITG to form a committee to monitor return of residents and to ensure that no terrorists return. When Dr. al-Abadi from the Prime Minister's office suggested the local sheikhs meet weekly, they agreed to elect four representatives who would meet.

**¶9.** (C) COMMENT: MNF-I has already provided some compensation, and there is a concern that if the ITG does not get its own programs started, the local population will look to the Coalition, not the ITG, as its key interlocutor on reconstruction. The ITG in turn needs to empower the

provincial government to assume the lead in all compensation and reconstruction efforts. If not, the ITG will lose the momentum created by MNF-I compensation efforts. High visibility projects are essential. END

COMMENT  
Khalilzad